

World
Watch
Research

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Full Country Dossier

February 2023



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

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Introduction

World Watch List 2023

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	14.4	98	96	94	94	94
2	Somalia	16.5	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.6	8.7	92	91	92	92	91
3	Yemen	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	5.9	89	88	87	85	86
4	Eritrea	14.6	14.9	15.5	15.9	15.7	12.2	89	88	88	87	86
5	Libya	15.6	15.5	15.9	16.1	16.3	9.1	88	91	92	90	87
6	Nigeria	13.8	13.8	14.6	14.8	14.4	16.7	88	87	85	80	80
7	Pakistan	13.4	13.8	14.8	14.8	12.9	16.7	86	87	88	88	87
8	Iran	14.5	14.6	13.8	15.8	16.5	10.7	86	85	86	85	85
9	Afghanistan	15.4	15.7	15.4	16.1	16.6	4.6	84	98	94	93	94
10	Sudan	14.1	14.2	14.9	14.9	15.5	9.4	83	79	79	85	87
11	India	12.3	13.1	13.0	14.8	13.3	15.7	82	82	83	83	83
12	Syria	13.2	14.1	13.6	14.1	14.1	11.3	80	78	81	82	82
13	Saudi Arabia	15.2	15.3	14.9	15.8	16.7	2.4	80	81	78	79	77
14	Myanmar	12.5	11.6	13.9	13.9	12.9	15.4	80	79	74	73	71
15	Maldives	15.4	15.3	13.8	16.0	16.4	0.2	77	77	77	78	78
16	China	12.9	10.0	12.7	14.5	15.6	11.1	77	76	74	70	65
17	Mali	11.1	10.1	14.7	10.3	15.1	15.0	76	70	67	66	68
18	Iraq	14.1	14.6	14.0	14.8	13.9	4.6	76	78	82	76	79
19	Algeria	14.1	14.1	11.5	13.7	15.1	4.8	73	71	70	73	70
20	Mauritania	14.5	14.2	13.3	14.1	14.2	1.3	72	70	71	68	67
21	Uzbekistan	14.9	12.7	13.9	12.7	15.6	1.5	71	71	71	73	74
22	Colombia	11.8	8.9	13.1	11.3	10.4	15.4	71	68	67	62	58
23	Burkina Faso	9.4	9.7	12.5	9.6	13.8	15.6	71	68	67	66	48
24	CAR	10.3	8.6	13.9	9.6	12.2	15.6	70	68	66	68	70
25	Vietnam	11.8	9.6	12.8	14.6	14.4	6.9	70	71	72	72	70
26	Turkmenistan	14.5	11.3	13.6	14.1	15.7	0.6	70	69	70	70	69
27	Cuba	13.1	8.3	13.1	13.2	14.9	7.0	70	66	62	52	49
28	Niger	9.4	9.5	14.5	7.7	13.1	15.4	70	68	62	60	52
29	Morocco	13.2	13.8	10.9	12.2	14.5	4.8	69	69	67	66	63
30	Bangladesh	12.6	10.7	12.8	11.3	10.6	10.7	69	68	67	63	58
31	Laos	11.7	10.2	13.3	14.2	14.0	5.0	68	69	71	72	71
32	Mozambique	9.3	8.5	13.9	8.4	12.5	15.6	68	65	63	43	43
33	Indonesia	11.3	12.0	11.6	11.1	9.2	12.8	68	68	63	60	65
34	Qatar	14.2	14.1	10.5	13.2	14.4	1.5	68	74	67	66	62
35	Egypt	12.7	13.5	11.6	12.1	10.8	7.0	68	71	75	76	76
36	Tunisia	12.0	12.8	10.4	12.0	13.5	6.5	67	66	67	64	63
37	DRC	8.0	7.9	12.6	9.7	13.0	15.6	67	66	64	56	55
38	Mexico	10.3	8.3	12.5	11.0	10.5	13.9	67	65	64	60	61
39	Ethiopia	9.9	10.3	13.1	10.4	12.1	10.6	66	66	65	63	65
40	Bhutan	13.2	12.3	11.6	13.9	14.2	1.1	66	67	64	61	64
41	Turkey	12.8	11.5	11.8	13.0	11.5	5.7	66	65	69	63	66
42	Comoros	12.7	14.0	11.2	12.4	14.2	1.5	66	63	62	57	56
43	Malaysia	12.8	14.3	11.4	12.2	11.1	3.9	66	63	63	62	60
44	Tajikistan	13.8	12.2	12.3	12.8	13.4	1.1	66	65	66	65	65
45	Cameroon	8.8	7.6	12.6	7.2	13.1	15.9	65	65	64	60	54
46	Brunei	14.8	14.6	10.1	10.9	14.4	0.4	65	64	64	63	63
47	Oman	14.0	14.1	10.3	13.3	12.9	0.6	65	66	63	62	59
48	Kazakhstan	13.2	11.6	11.9	12.7	14.2	1.1	65	64	64	64	63
49	Jordan	13.0	14.0	10.5	12.3	12.7	2.0	65	66	64	64	65
50	Nicaragua	10.8	5.9	11.9	12.8	13.6	9.4	65	56	51	41	41

Rank	Country	Private life	Family life	Community life	National life	Church life	Violence	Total Score WWL 2023	Total Score WWL 2022	Total Score WWL 2021	Total Score WWL 2020	Total Score WWL 2019
51	Kenya	10.3	9.2	11.4	8.0	11.5	13.3	64	63	62	61	61
52	Kuwait	13.5	13.7	9.8	12.3	13.1	1.1	64	64	63	62	60
53	Tanzania	9.3	10.8	10.3	8.6	8.7	15.6	63	61	58	55	52
54	UAE	13.4	13.4	9.9	11.2	12.8	1.1	62	62	62	60	58
55	Nepal	12.0	9.8	9.4	13.0	12.6	4.4	61	64	66	64	64
56	Djibouti	12.3	12.6	12.7	10.1	12.3	0.6	60	59	56	56	56
57	Palestinian Territories	13.0	13.3	9.7	10.3	12.0	2.0	60	59	58	60	57
58	Azerbaijan	13.2	10.0	9.5	12.0	13.6	0.6	59	60	56	57	57
59	Kyrgyzstan	12.9	10.2	11.0	10.4	12.0	2.0	59	58	58	57	56
60	Chad	11.6	8.2	10.2	10.2	10.3	7.6	58	55	53	56	48
61	Russian Federation	12.3	7.9	10.3	11.8	12.8	2.0	57	56	57	60	60
62	Sri Lanka	12.8	9.1	10.6	11.3	9.5	3.9	57	63	62	65	58
63	Rwanda	9.4	7.7	9.0	10.4	11.7	8.9	57	50	42	42	41
64	Venezuela	6.0	4.6	11.7	10.2	11.4	11.7	56	51	39	42	41
65	Burundi	7.6	7.8	9.4	9.8	9.7	11.1	55	52	48	48	43
66	Bahrain	12.7	13.3	8.7	10.7	8.8	0.9	55	57	56	55	55
67	Honduras	7.1	5.0	11.9	7.6	9.8	11.9	53	48	46	39	38
68	Angola	6.8	6.7	8.1	11.5	11.4	7.2	52	51	46	43	42
69	Uganda	8.1	5.0	7.4	6.7	9.2	14.8	51	48	47	48	47
70	Togo	9.2	6.7	9.3	7.1	11.0	5.4	49	44	43	41	42
71	Guinea	10.3	7.5	8.3	8.3	10.5	3.0	48	43	47	45	46
72	South Sudan	5.7	4.4	7.0	6.3	7.6	15.0	46	43	43	44	44
73	El Salvador	7.7	4.2	10.6	7.4	9.1	6.7	46	45	42	38	30
74	Ivory Coast	12.0	6.5	8.7	5.9	8.0	3.3	44	42	42	42	43
75	Gambia	8.3	8.2	8.9	8.8	8.9	1.1	44	44	43	43	43
76	Belarus	9.5	3.8	4.8	9.4	12.1	3.3	43	33	30	28	35

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Sources and definitions

- This country report is a collation of data and analysis based around Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) and includes statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database (WCD).
- Highlighted links in the text can be found written out in full at the conclusion of each main section under the heading “External links”. In order to reduce the length of these reference sections, a table containing links to regularly used sources can be found at the beginning of the “Keys to Understanding” chapter under the heading “Links for general background information”. Where one of these sources has been quoted in the dossier text, a quote reference is supplied as indicated in the second column of the table.
- The WWL 2023 reporting period was 1 October 2021 - 30 September 2022.
- The definition of persecution used in WWL analysis is: “Any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ. This can include hostile attitudes, words and actions towards Christians”. This broad definition includes (but is not limited to) restrictions, pressure, discrimination, opposition, disinformation, injustice, intimidation, mistreatment, marginalization, oppression, intolerance, infringement, violation, ostracism, hostilities, harassment, abuse, violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide.
- The latest update of WWL Methodology including appendices can be found on the [World Watch List Documentation](#) page of the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom).

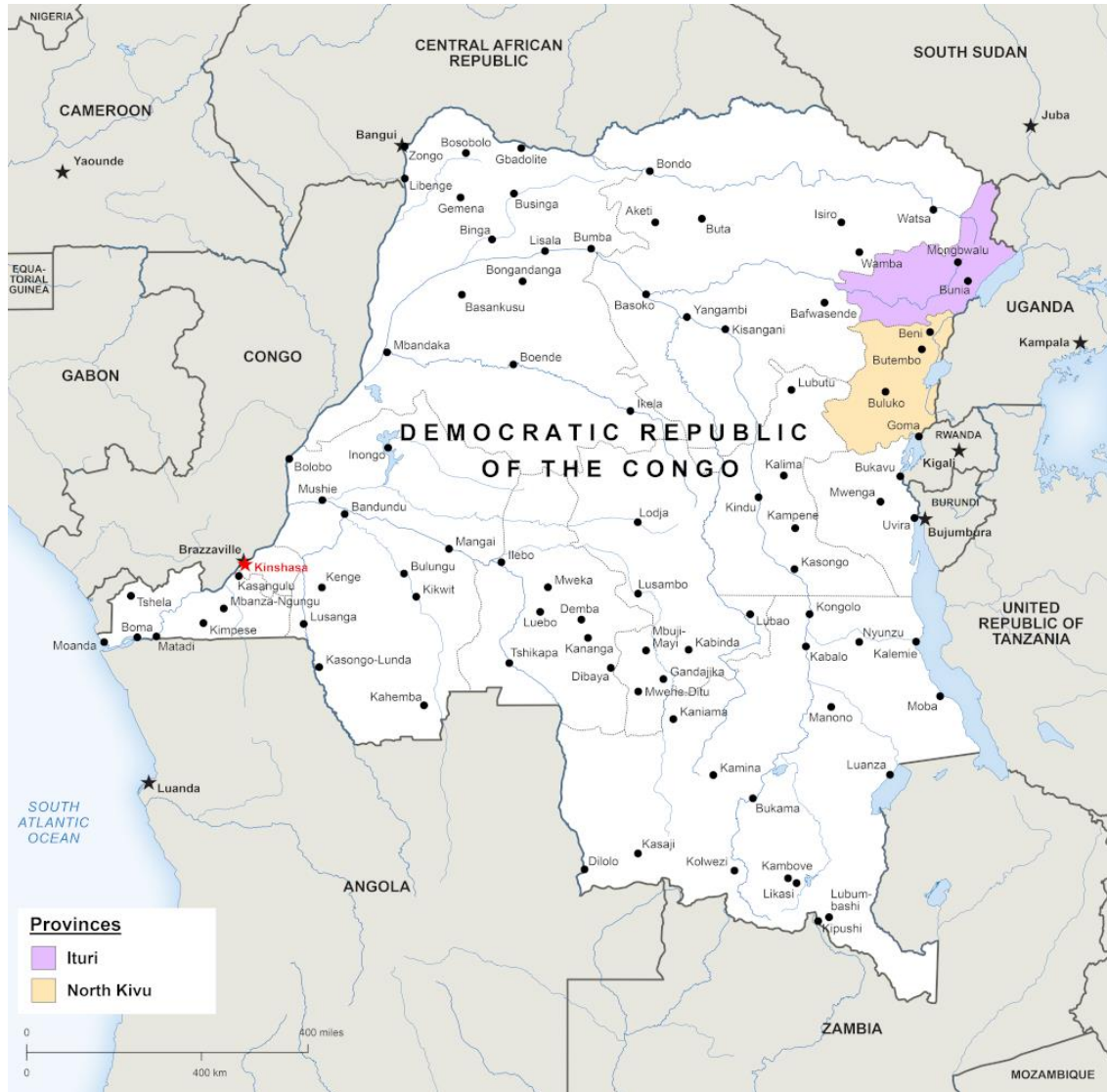
WWL 2023 Situation in brief / DRC

Brief country details

DRC: Population (UN estimate for 2022)	Christians	Chr%
95,241,000	90,570,000	95.1

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2022)

Map of country



DRC: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2023	67	37
WWL 2022	66	40
WWL 2021	64	40
WWL 2020	56	57
WWL 2019	55	54

Ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2019-2023 reporting periods

Dominant persecution engines and drivers

DRC: Main Persecution engines	Main drivers
Islamic oppression	Violent religious groups
Organized corruption and crime	Violent religious groups, Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups
Dictatorial paranoia	Government officials
Clan oppression	Ethnic group leaders
Ethno-religious hostility	Ethnic group leaders

Engines and Drivers are listed in order of strength. Only Very strong / Strong / Medium are shown here.

Brief description of the persecution situation

The Islamist group “Alliance for Democratic Forces” (ADF-NALU) is responsible for attacks on Christians and churches in North Kivu, in the eastern part of the country. In the *Family sphere*, converts both from Islam and from indigenous religions face pressure to take part in non-Christian religious activities and ceremonies. Representatives of the Catholic Church, who publicly urged the government to abide by the constitutionally mandated electoral deadlines, reported that they had experienced verbal harassment and interference based on their advocacy.

Summary of international obligations and rights violations

DRC has committed to respect and protect fundamental rights in the following international treaties:

1. [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR)
2. [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (ICESCR)
3. [Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#) (CAT)
4. [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#) (CEDAW)
5. [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC)

DRC is not fulfilling its international obligations by regularly violating or failing to protect the following rights of Christians:

- Christian converts are ostracized and threatened with divorce and loss of inheritance (ICCPR Art. 18)
- Christian female converts run the risk of being abducted and forcibly married to Muslim men (ICCPR Art. 23; CEDAW Art. 16 and ICESCR Art. 10)
- Perpetrators of violence against Christians are sometimes left unpunished (ICCPR Art. 2)
- Christian children can be forced to learn Islamic scriptures (ICCPR Art. 18 and CRC Art. 14)

Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period

- [7 July 2022](#): Suspected Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) militants entered Lume, in North Kivu province and burned down a health center, killing four patients inside. The militants killed nine more civilians before retreating into Virunga National Park. Infants and patients were among those killed in the majority Christian town (Monitor, 8 July 2022). According to VOA reporting on 9 July, [Islamic State claimed responsibility](#) through its news agency.
- [29 June 2022](#): ADF militants ambushed and killed three persons, including a woman, in Vyerere village near Halungupa in Ruwenzori sector of Beni territory in North Kivu (HumAngle, 1 July 2022).
- [25 June 2022](#): ADF continued its attacks on Christian communities in eastern DRC by attacking the settlement of Mamove, killing six women and three men, wounding two other people and torching two houses. In a second raid later that day, attackers killed five men in Kisima-center on a major road leading to the Ugandan border (Monitor, 27 June 2022).
- [21 June 2022](#): ADF militants killed at least 10 Christians near the village of Makisabo, Beni, when their 3 vehicles were ambushed (ICC, 22 June 2022).

Specific examples of positive developments

Talks between Rwanda and DRC continued in 2022 in an attempt to solve the crisis in the eastern part of DRC. However, many observers believe that these talks are currently unlikely to bring meaningful solutions to the situation.

External Links - Situation in brief

- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cat.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>
- Summary of international obligations and rights violations: Convention on the Rights of the Child - <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 7 July 2022 - <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/suspected-adf-rebels-kill-13-in-dr-congo-attack--3873702>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: Islamic State claimed responsibility - <https://www.voanews.com/a/infants-patients-among-13-killed-in-congo-hospital-attack-/6652166.html>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 29 June 2022: - <https://humanglemedia.com/adf-rebels-kill-villagers-in-beni-territory-dr-congo/>

- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 25 June 2022: - <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/adf-rebels-kill-14-civilians-in-eastern-dr-congo-3861212>
- Specific examples of violations of rights in the reporting period: 21 June 2022: - <https://www.persecution.org/2022/06/22/least-10-christians-killed-drc-attack/WWL 2023: Keys to understanding / Democratic Republic of the Congo>

Links for general background information

Name	Quote Reference	Link	Last accessed on
Amnesty International 2021/22 country report – covering 154 countries	AI country report 2021/22 (pp. 145-149)	https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/POL1048702022ENGLISH.pdf	20 June 2022
BBC News country profile	BBC country profile	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13283212	20 June 2022
Bertelsmann Transformation Index country report 2022 – covering 137 countries	BTI report 2022	https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard/COD	20 June 2022
CIA World Factbook	CIA Factbook	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/congo-democratic-republic-of-the/	20 June 2022
Crisis24 country report (Garda World) – covering 193 countries	Crisis24 country report	https://crisis24.garda.com/insights-intelligence/intelligence/country-reports/dr-congo	20 June 2022
Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2021 – covering 167 countries	EIU 2021 (p. 58/61)	https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/eiu-democracy-index-2021.pdf	20 June 2022
FFP's Fragile States Index 2022 – covering 179 countries	FSI 2022	https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/	25 July 2022
Freedom House's 2022 Democracy index – covering 29 countries, DRC not included	Democracy Index 2022	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores	
Freedom House's 2022 Global Freedom index – covering 210 countries	Global Freedom Index 2022	https://freedomhouse.org/country/democratic-republic-congo/freedom-world/2022	20 June 2022
Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2022 report – covering 70 countries, DRC not included	Freedom on the Net 2022	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-net/scores	1 February 2023
Human Rights Watch World Report 2022 (country chapter) – covering 100+ countries	HRW 2022 country chapter	https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/democratic-republic-congo	20 June 2022
Internet World Stats 2022	IWS 2022	https://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#cd	20 June 2022
RSF's 2022 World Press Freedom Index – covering 180 countries	World Press Freedom 2022	https://rsf.org/en/democratic-republic-congo	20 June 2022
Transparency International's 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index – covering 180 countries	CPI 2021	https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021/index/cod	20 June 2022
UNDP's Global Human Development Indicators (country profile) – covering 189 countries	HDI profile	https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data/#/countries/COD	20 June 2022
US State Department's 2021 International Religious Freedom country profile	IRFR 2021	https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/	20 June 2022
USCIRF 2022 country reports – covering 15 CPC / 12 SWL, DRC not included	USCIRF 2022	https://www.uscirf.gov/countries	
World Bank country overview – covering 178 countries	World Bank overview 2022	https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/drc/overview#1	20 June 2022
World Bank country profile data – covering 222 countries	World Bank profile (2020 data)	https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&b450fd57tbar=ydd=yinf=nzm=country=COD	20 June 2022
World Bank Macro Poverty Outlook 2022 – covering 147 countries (divided per region)	Macro Poverty Outlook 2022 (pp.22-23)	https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/bae48ff2f2fc5a869546775b3f010735-0500062021/related/mpo-ssa.pdf	20 June 2022

Recent history

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was a Belgian colony, which, along with other African countries, declared independence in 1960. However, civil war followed and the secession of some provinces which led to a fragmentation of the country. The country was caught up in a [proxy war](#) between the West (headed by the USA) and the Soviet Union (Source: US State Department, Office of Historian, accessed 9 September 2020). The election of Joseph Kasavubu as president and Patrice Lumumba as prime minister did not bring peace and the latter was arrested and [killed](#) on 17 January 1961 (The Guardian, 17 January 2011).

On 24 November 1965, Mobutu seized power with the help of the CIA and created an environment where only one party could flourish, namely the Popular Revolutionary Movement. The Constitution gave him unlimited power, he accumulated great wealth and supported guerrilla fighters in neighboring countries such as Angola. The rule of Mobutu was not unchallenged. Riots, protests and guerrilla fighters supported by Angola put pressure on Mobutu.

In 1994, the World Bank declared the country bankrupt. The 1994 atrocities in Rwanda had a spillover effect. Finally, with mainly Tutsi soldiers trained by Rwanda and Uganda, Laurent Kabila overthrew Mobutu in 1997. Kabila was assassinated by his own bodyguard and was replaced by his son, Joseph Kabila, who remained in power until January 2019.

The wars in DRC returned to the spotlight in 2003 when the president of the country requested the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate the [crimes](#) committed by various rebel groups (ICC Press Release, 19 April 2004). After an extensive investigation the Court indicted Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, Germain Katanga, Mathieu Ngudjolo Chui, Bosco Ntaganda, Callixte Mbarushimana, and Sylvestre Mudacumura.

The situation in DRC has been exacerbated by the continual interference of neighboring countries. According to a report by [The Guardian](#) on 18 October 2012, the United Nations officially stated that the Rwandan defense minister was the de facto leader of rebels in DRC. Later UN reports (in 2014) also implicated Uganda and Burundi.

After years of speculation, President Kabila decided to [step down](#) and not run for a third term in the presidential elections held in December 2018 (France 24, 8 August 2018). [Newly elected President](#) Felix Tshisekedi was sworn in as successor to Joseph Kabila in January 2019 in the country's first transfer of power via democratic election in 59 years of independence. The country's electoral commission declared him winner despite credible evidence of election fraud (The Guardian, 24 January 2019).

In 2022, the global community has closely observed the ideology and activities of the ADF and the UN has indicated that [links](#) exist with the Islamic State group (Bloomberg, 18 June 2022).

Political and legal landscape

DRC is a unitary multiparty republic with two legislative houses - the Senate with 108 members and the National Assembly with 500 members. The president is the head of state and the prime minister is head of the government. With 26 justices, the Supreme Court is the highest judicial organ in the country, while the country also has a Constitutional Court with nine judges.

Although President Kabila's term in office ended in 2016, the country failed to hold elections, which caused great tension. Presidential elections did not take place until December 2018 (without President Kabila running for a third term). Under Kabila, political corruption, weak rule of law and violence remained prevalent. According to Reporters Without Borders [2017 Freedom of the Press Index](#), threats, physical attacks, abductions, arrests, and cases of prolonged detention targeting journalists were almost never investigated. Under Kabila's presidency, at least 11 journalists were murdered without consequence for the perpetrators.

In its [2019 Human Rights Report](#), the US State Department summarized the abysmal human rights condition in the country as follows:

- “Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: unlawful or arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings; forced disappearances; torture and cases of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary detention; political prisoners or detainees; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; serious abuses in conflict, including reportedly unlawful or widespread civilian harm, enforced disappearances or abductions, torture and physical abuses or punishment, and unlawful recruitment or use of child soldiers by illegal armed groups; serious restrictions on free expression and media, including violence or threats of violence against journalists, unjustified arrests or

prosecutions of journalists, censorship, and the existence of criminal libel laws; substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association; serious government corruption; lack of investigation of and accountability for gender-based violence, including but not limited to domestic and intimate partner violence, sexual violence, child, early, and forced marriage, and other harmful practices; trafficking in persons; crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting persons with disabilities, members of national, racial, and ethnic minority groups, and indigenous people; crimes involving violence or threat of violence targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex persons; and existence of the worst forms of child labor.”

According to the Human Rights Watch [2019 World Report](#):

- On 24 January 2019 Felix Tshisekedi was sworn in as president following a long-delayed and disputed national election, marred by widespread irregularities, voter suppression, violence, and interference from armed groups. More than a million Congolese were unable to vote because voting in three areas was postponed to March 2019, due to security concerns and an outbreak of Ebola in the eastern region. The president promised a guarantee to each citizen the respect of their fundamental rights and end all forms of discrimination, promising that his government will prioritize an effective and determined fight against corruption, impunity, bad governance, and tribalism. Hence, he released most political prisoners and activists detained during the country’s protracted political crisis, and those living in exile were allowed to return home.

However, the election of the new president has not reduced tensions. According to International Crisis Group’s (ICG) [January 2020 Global Overview](#):

- "Fighting escalated in Ituri province in northeast between security forces and armed groups, militia attacks on civilians surged in Beni territory, North Kivu late January, and tensions persisted between President Tshisekedi and allies of former President Kabila. In Ituri, clashes between security forces and armed group Cooperative for Development of Congo (CODECO) in Djugu and Mahagi territories 1-22 January left at least 43 dead."

According to the Human Rights Watch (HRW 2022 country chapter):

- "Journalists, activists, whistleblowers, and critics of government policies were intimidated and threatened, beaten, arrested, and in some cases prosecuted by the authorities and security forces."
- "In March [2021], the International Criminal Court’s appeals chamber confirmed the conviction and sentence of Bosco Ntaganda, a former rebel leader and subsequently general in the Congolese army, to 30 years in prison on 18 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity."
- In November [2021], the authorities opened an inquiry following allegations of high-level corruption reported by a consortium of media and international groups which went through 3.5 million leaked documents. The “Congo Hold-Up” findings [alleged](#) corruption under former President Kabila" (HRW, 1 December 2021).

Gender perspective

The legal landscape of the DRC is restrictive towards women and girls in several regards; in particular, many harmful practices relating to marriage remain pervasive. These include child marriage, polygamy and levirate marriages ([OECD, 2019](#)). As highlighted in an [ACHPR report \(2015\)](#), men are often pressured into practicing polygamy to demonstrate their power. Child marriage is high - in spite of the legal age of marriage being set at 18 (Law 2016-008, Art. 352, 2016) - with 37% of girls and 6% of boys marrying by the age of 18 ([Girls Not Brides, 2020](#)). Whilst sexual violence and rape are outlawed, there is insufficient legislation addressing domestic violence ([OECD, 2019](#)). Men and women have equal rights in relation to divorce and child guardianship, although in the event of a divorce, a woman must repay the dowry she received at the point of marriage (Family Code, 1987). In June 2022, International Federation for Human Rights [noted](#) that "Our organizations note with concern the shrinking of civic and democratic space. This is epitomized by numerous instances of administrative and judicial authorities attacking political opponents' — and human rights defenders' and journalists' — freedom of movement and the right to personal liberty."

Religious landscape

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	90,570,000	95.1
Muslim	1,391,000	1.5
Hindu	141,000	0.1
Buddhist	5,400	0.0
Ethno-religionist	2,311,000	2.4
Jewish	400	0.0
Bahai	398,000	0.4
Atheist	19,700	0.0
Agnostic	397,000	0.4
Other	8,500	0.0
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2022)

A significant number of people mix Christianity with elements of ethno-religionist belief systems. Some Evangelical groups reject this practice, which can cause tension as a result. Geographically, there are no specific areas where religious affiliation is concentrated.

Economic landscape

DRC is one of the richest countries in Africa in terms of minerals and natural resources. It has vast deposits of industrial diamonds, cobalt and copper. The country also has one of the largest forest reserves in Africa. In the Congo River - the biggest river in Africa - it has half of the hydroelectric potential of the continent. The country has been struggling with inflation and decelerating economic growth. This was mainly due to declining prices and shrinking global demand for raw materials such as copper and cobalt which account for 80% of DRC's export revenue. The national currency is expected to continue its decline against the dollar as the rate of inflation increases.

According to the World Bank country overview:

- **Economic growth:** Economic activity rebounded in 2021, with higher prices and production of copper and global lifting GDP growth to an estimated 5.7 percent and supporting a narrower current account deficit. Reserves increased, easing pressures on the currency and inflation.
- **Fiscal deficit:** Higher commodity prices also lifted domestic revenues, which coupled with increased grants, allowed fiscal consolidation to be achieved despite higher expenditures. Fiscal accounts were balanced in 2021 compared to a budget deficit of 1.2 % in 2020.
- **Current account deficit:** The current account deficit widened to 4.0% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020 and was only partly financed by capital inflows which led to a decline in international reserves.
- **Inflation:** With a slower depreciation rate of the CDF and a deceleration in inflation (to 9.1 in 2021), the Central Bank progressively cut its policy rate from 18.5 percent in January 2021 to 8.5 percent in mid-June 2021.

According to World Bank's 2021 Macro Poverty Outlook (for Sub-Saharan Africa):

- **Economic output:** “Economic activity in DRC recovered strongly in 2021 with real GDP growth estimated at 5.7 percent. The mining sector was a key driver of growth- copper and cobalt production rose by 12.0 and 7.6 percent, respectively, as domestic production capacity increased with the launch in mid-2021 of the Kamoakakula mining project. The easing of COVID restrictions, and higher revenues from the mining sector, which also benefited from rising prices, supported growth of non-mining sectors by 3.9 percent (2020: -1.3 percent).”
- **Poverty:** Poverty remains widespread, including in urban areas. Significant geographical disparities exist between provinces, with extreme poverty concentrated in central and northwestern provinces. DRC is second only to Nigeria in Sub-Saharan Africa in the number of citizens facing extreme poverty. Despite some improvements in recent years, social and human development indicators remain weak: in 2020, infant mortality was 63.8 per 1000 live births, higher than the Sub-Saharan average of 50.3, while the HCI of 0.37 is among the lowest of Sub-Saharan African countries.”

According to Heritage Foundation's [2022 Index of Economic Freedom](#):

- “The Democratic Republic of the Congo’s economic freedom score is 47.6, making its economy the 160th freest in the 2022 Index. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is ranked 40th among 47 countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa region, and its overall score is below the regional and world averages”.

Gender perspective

Within the DRC, women and girls are predominately economically dependent on their families. Despite having equal inheritance rights under law, customary and traditional practices continue to deny women their due inheritance ([OECD, 2019](#)). The DRC performs poorly on Georgetown’s Women, Peace and Security Index, which is heavily due to poor rates of financial inclusion for women, although this has improved in recent years ([Georgetown, 2021/22](#)). Representing a positive trend however, it was in the top ten countries where financial inclusion had risen the most during the reporting period. According to the UNDP's HDI profile, the female labor force participation is 60.7% (compared to 66.3% for men). Despite this relatively high participation rate for women, it is usual that men are the head of the household and in charge of financial decisions ([OECD, 2019](#)).

Social and cultural landscape

DRC is the largest country in the Great Lakes region. It was part of the old Kongo Kingdom and has more than 200 ethnic groups. It shares borders with Congo Brazzaville, Angola, Zambia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Burundi, Uganda, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic (CAR). DRC is the fourth most populous country in Africa.

According to the UNDP's HDI profile and CIA Factbook:

- **Main ethnic groups:** Mongo, Luba, Kongo (all Bantu), and the Mangbetu-Azande (Hamitic) which make up about 45% of the total population
- **Main languages:** French (official), Lingala (a lingua franca trade language), Kingwana (a dialect of Kiswahili or Swahili), Kikongo, Tshiluba
- **Urban population:** 45% of the total population
- **Rate of urbanization:** 4.33% (2020-2025 est.)
- **Population growth rate:** 3.16 % (2021 est.)
- **Median age:** 17.0 years
- **Expected years of schooling:** 9.7 years
- **Literacy rate, adult (15 years and older):** 77.0%
- **Employment population ratio (15 years and older):** 60.8%
- **Unemployment, total (% of labor force):** 4.2%
- **Unemployment, youth (ages 15-24):** 8.0%
- **Refugees:** 518,303 - mainly from Rwanda, CAR, South Sudan and Burundi ([UNHCR Operational Data Portal, 31 May 2022](#)).
- **IDPs:** Over 5,000,000. "Conflict and violence triggered 2.7 million internal displacements in DRC’s eastern provinces of Ituri, North Kivu, and South Kivu and the Kasai region in 2021, up from the 2.2 million recorded for the country in 2020. People fled military operations

against non-state armed groups (NSAGs), clashes between groups and intercommunal violence. IDPs' living conditions also deteriorated in some parts of the country. As of the end of the year [2021], 5,339,000 people remained displaced due to armed conflict and violence"([IDMC, 2021 Country profile](#)).

According to the UNDP's HDI profile:

- **Human Development Index:** With a score of 0.480, DRC ranks 175th out of 189 countries
- **Life expectancy at birth:** 60.7 years
- **Gender Development index (GDI):** 0.845
- **Gender Inequality index (GII):** 0.617

Gender perspective

As highlighted in a [2019 OECD report](#), daughters are often viewed as temporary members of the family unit, as they can be wedded off. This notion also continues into marriage; it is common for a deceased husband's family to take all of his wealth and property, leaving her and her children destitute. This exemplifies the underlying social and cultural norms in the DRC that discriminate against women. In light of these norms, female converts can be married off to an older Muslim with relative ease. Within such marriages, women and girls are commonly exposed to domestic violence and sexual violence; it is generally accepted by both men and women that a woman's failings in marriage (e.g. burning a meal or refusing sex) is a legitimate reason for domestic violence ([UK Home Office, 2018](#)). Within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic violence reportedly worsened ([GNWP, 22 February 2021](#)).

Technological landscape

According to Internet World Stats (IWS 2022):

- **Internet usage:** 17.4% of the population – survey date: December 2021 (Most recent survey at time of writing.)
- **Facebook usage:** 5% of the population – survey date: January 2022

According to the World Bank country profile:

- **Mobile subscriptions (per 100 people):** 43.4

Statistics on internet usage and mobile phone ownership by gender are lacking. An indication of the existence of a gender gap in relation to social media access is provided by [Napoleon Cat](#) (January 2023) which revealed that 62.8% of Facebook users were men, compared to 37.2% of women.

Although DRC is one of the wealthiest countries in Africa in terms of natural resources, internal conflicts (since independence) have made progress illusive. Corporations and neighboring countries have been fueling the (mineral-related) conflict and, at one point, Uganda and Rwanda sent in troops. As a result, the country has failed to live up to its potential: Infrastructure is poor, educational facilities are not well-equipped; hospitals and clinics lack professional staff and medical equipment.

Security situation

The crisis in DRC started more than 50 years ago and has continued into the WWL 2023 reporting period. The conflict in the eastern part of the country continues to derail the peace process. Foreign countries like Rwanda have also been interfering in the country and making the situation worse. Much of the violence in North Kivu, Kisangani and in Kasai has an ethnic dimension. DRC has great ethnic diversity, some estimating the total number of ethnic groups as being as high as 450. However, the most serious threat of all is that the eastern part of the country has become a safe haven for the Islamist group “Allied Democratic Forces” (ADF-NALU), which is seeking to create an Islamic State in Uganda and has been targeting churches and Christians in north-eastern DRC for several years, ever since its attempt to overthrow the Ugandan government failed.

Human Rights Watch ([HRW country chapter 2021](#)) summarized well the enormous challenge that the country still faced in 2022:

- “More than 130 armed groups were active in eastern Congo’s North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri provinces, attacking civilians. The groups included the mainly ethnic Lendu association of militia Cooperative for the Development of Congo (CODECO); the largely Ugandan Allied Democratic Forces (ADF); the Nduma Defense of Congo-Renové (NDC-R); the largely Rwandan Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and allied Congolese Nyatura groups; the Mazembe and Yakutumba Mai Mai groups; and several Burundian armed groups. Many of their commanders have been implicated in war crimes, including ethnic massacres, rape, forced recruitment of children, and pillage.”

According to Kivu Security Tracker (reporting in: [The Landscape of Armed Groups in Eastern Congo](#), February 2021):

- "Conflict and insecurity continued to plague populations in the eastern Congo in 2020. Amidst a global pandemic draining humanitarian funding – only 34% of requested annual aid had reached the Congo in 2020 – conflict continues to simmer, with a record high of 5.5 million displaced across the country. Recent Kivu Security Tracker data also indicates a steep rise in killings, violent deaths and other forms of violence since the end of 2019, compared to previous years."
- Biographies of 122 armed groups involved in violence in DRC are listed on pages 19-43.

Gender perspective

Within this context of insecurity, women and girls remain especially vulnerable to incidences of sexual and gender-based violence at the hands of armed groups ([UNHR, 2020](#); [Georgetown, 2021/22](#)). As recognized in a [2020 Institute for Development Studies report](#), the justice system is fragile. Women who report sexual violence encounter major obstacles in attaining justice and high levels of impunity: “[T]his reinforces the pre-existing norms and patterns of discrimination against women, both inside and outside of the conflict.”

Efforts have been made to engage more women in the peace-building process, in recognition of the positive role that they could play ([OCHA, May 2019](#); [DRC, 2021](#)). Men and boys are vulner-

able to forced recruitment into militias, as well as abductions and killings. Pastors in particular are targeted by jihadists.

Trends analysis

1) The government that replaced Kabila has brought little change

In the past, the Kabila government denied citizens' basic rights of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of association and other fundamental human rights. The new president and government since December 2018 has not brought significant change - there is still a lack of rule of law, and lack of security and corruption is still rampant. The overall situation in DRC remains very precarious.

2) The fact that the country is very rich in minerals is negatively impacting the country's stability

Rebel groups are financing their operations by selling minerals vital for international electronic companies on the black market.

3) The security situation remains fragile

The fragility of the security and political situation could expose Christians to increasing levels of violent persecution and provide the ADF-NALU with an opportunity to expand. The fighting between a host of different armed groups is likely to continue and increase. ADF has been growing in influence and was designated a terrorist group by the [US State Department](#) (Media note, 10 March 2021). It has been involved in many atrocities which have been documented by human rights groups. This problem will likely continue and Christians in the region will be seriously affected. Its impact is also being felt in Uganda where ADF has also carried out suicide bombings.

4) The presence of Rwandan forces in DRC

Many experts, including [UN experts](#), have stated that "Rwandan troops have been fighting alongside the M23 rebel group in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and providing it with weapons and support." In June 2022, [Amnesty International](#) released a statement saying that DRC's military escalation with Rwanda is devastating for civilians. Asked by [France 24](#) in July 2022 whether Rwanda has not supported M23, Kagame refused to answer the question directly but pointed to the fact that the situation in DRC is much more complex than the involvement of Rwandan troops.

External Links - Keys to understanding

- Recent history: proxy war - <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/congo-decolonization>
- Recent history: killed - <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/jan/17/patrice-lumumba-50th-anniversary-assassination>
- Recent history: crimes - https://www.icc-cpi.int/en_menus/icc/press%20and%20media/press%20releases/2004/Pages/prosecutor%20receives%20referral%20of%20the%20situation%20in%20the%20democratic%20republic%20of%20congo.aspx
- Recent history: The Guardian - <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/oct/17/rwanda-minister-leader-congo-rebels-kabarebe>
- Recent history: step down - <https://www.france24.com/en/eye-africa/20180808-2018-08-08-2146-eye-africa>

- Recent history: Newly elected President - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/24/tshisekedi-calls-for-a-congo-for-all-after-disputed-election>
- Recent history: links - <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-06-18/un-experts-warn-of-islamic-state-tie-to-islamist-rebels-in-congo#xj4y7vzkg>
- Political and legal landscape: 2017 Freedom of the Press Index - <https://rsf.org/en/democratic-republic-congo>
- Political and legal landscape: 2019 Human Rights Report, - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>
- Political and legal landscape: 2019 World Report - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/democratic-republic-congo>
- Political and legal landscape: January 2020 Global Overview - <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/february-alerts-and-january-trends-2020#democratic-republic-of-congo>
- Political and legal landscape: alleged - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/12/02/congo-investigation-chance-fight-corruption>
- Political and legal landscape: (OECD, 2019) - <https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/CD.pdf>
- Political and legal landscape: ACHPR report (2015) - <https://www.achpr.org/states/detail?id=14>
- Political and legal landscape: Girls Not Brides, 2020 - <https://atlas.girlsnotbrides.org/map/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>
- Political and legal landscape: OECD, 2019 - <https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/CD.pdf>
- Political and legal landscape: noted - <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/Africa/democratic-republic-of-congo/drc-human-rights-concerns-tshisekedi>
- Economic landscape: 2022 Index of Economic Freedom - <https://www.heritage.org/index/country/democraticrepubliccongo>
- Economic landscape: OECD, 2019 - <https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/CD.pdf>
- Economic landscape: Georgetown, 2021/22 - <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/WPS-Index-2021.pdf>
- Economic landscape: OECD, 2019 - <https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/CD.pdf>
- Social and cultural landscape: UNHCR Operational Data Portal, 31 May 2022 - <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/93631>
- Social and cultural landscape: IDMC, 2021 Country profile - <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/democratic-republic-of-the-congo#overview>
- Social and cultural landscape: 2019 OECD report - <https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/CD.pdf>
- Social and cultural landscape: UK Home Office, 2018 - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/742590/DRC_GBV_2018.v2_ext_003.pdf
- Social and cultural landscape: GNWP, 22 February 2021 - <https://gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/DRC-COVID-19-Profile.pdf>
- Technological landscape: Napoleon Cat - https://napoleoncat.com/stats/facebook-users-in-dr_congo/2023/01/
- Security situation: HRW country chapter 2021 - <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/democratic-republic-congo>
- Security situation: The Landscape of Armed Groups in Eastern Congo - <https://kivusecurity.nyc3.digitaloceanspaces.com/reports/39/2021%20KST%20report%20EN.pdf>
- Security situation: UNHR, 2020 - <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25928&LangID=E>
- Security situation: Georgetown, 2021/22 - <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/WPS-Index-2019-20-Report.pdf>

- Security situation: 2020 Institute for Development Studies report - https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/20.500.12413/15887/931_Supporting_Survivors_of_Sexual_Violence.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- Security situation: OCHA, May 2019; - <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/amplifying-drc-women-s-leadership-peace-processes>
- Security situation: DRC, 2021). - <https://www.international-alert.org/projects/women-citizenship-and-peacebuilding-drc>
- Trends analysis: US State Department - <https://www.state.gov/state-department-terrorist-designations-of-isis-affiliates-and-leaders-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-and-mozambique/>
- Trends analysis: UN experts - <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/un-experts-say-rwanda-has-intervened-militarily-eastern-congo-2022-08-04/>
- Trends analysis: Amnesty International - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/06/drc-military-escalation-with-rwanda-devastating-for-civilians/>
- Trends analysis: France 24 - <https://www.france24.com/en/tv-shows/the-interview/20220708-exclusive-france-24-interviews-rwandan-president-paul-kagame>

WWL 2023: Church information / DRC

Christian origins

Christianity has a long history in DRC and can be traced back to 1491 when Roman Catholic priests arrived after Portuguese merchants had discovered the Congo River in 1482. However, as the main focus was the slave trade, Christian mission did not go deep inside the country. Not until the 19th century could Christianity become properly established.

- Catholic missionaries arrived in 1865. King Leopold II of Belgium was keen on establishing Belgium as a colonial power and helped missionaries by giving them land grants.
- Protestants entered the country in 1878 when British Baptists built their own mission stations along the Congo River.
- In 1891, Presbyterians came from the USA.
- In 1915 Pentecostals arrived from the UK. These were followed by Mennonites, Seventh-day Adventists and other denominations.

Church spectrum today

DRC: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	32,100	0.0
Catholic	52,166,000	57.6
Protestant	17,689,000	19.5
Independent	25,455,000	28.1
Unaffiliated	501,000	0.6
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-5,272,000	-5.8
Total	90,571,100	100.0

(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)

Evangelical movement	6,446,000	7.1
Renewalist movement	29,720,000	32.8

Data source: Johnson T M and Zurlo G A, eds, *World Christian Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed April 2022)

Orthodox: Eastern (Chalcedonian), Oriental (Pre-Chalcedonian, Non-Chalcedonian, Monophysite), Nestorian (Assyrian), and non-historical Orthodox. **Roman Catholics:** All Christians in communion with the Church of Rome. **Protestants:** Christians in churches originating in or in communion with the Western world's 16th-century Protestant Reformation. Includes Anglicans, Lutherans and Baptists (any of whom may be Charismatic) and denominational Pentecostals, but not Independent traditions such as Independent Baptists nor independent Charismatics. **Independents:** Christians who do not identify with the major Christian traditions (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant). **Unaffiliated Christians:** Persons professing publicly to be Christians but who are not affiliated to churches. **Doubly-affiliated Christians:** Persons affiliated to or claimed by 2 denominations at once. **Evangelical movement:** Churches, denominations, and individuals who identify themselves as evangelicals by membership in denominations linked to evangelical alliances (e.g., World Evangelical Alliance) or by self-identification in polls. **Renewalist movement:** Church members involved in Pentecostal/Charismatic renewal.

Areas where Christians face most difficulties

Christians face difficulties from Islamic militants who are particularly active in North Kivu, in the eastern part of the country.

Christian communities and how they are affected

Communities of expatriate Christians: Expatriate Christians in DRC are not forced into isolation from other Christians. This category is therefore not included in the WWL analysis for scoring.

Historical Christian communities: This category includes Roman Catholic churches and various Protestant denominations. They are present throughout the country and are exposed to persecution from armed groups. During times of political unrest, attacks on church properties and intimidation of church leaders is common. From Kinshasa, the capital, to the central Kasai Province and, more recently, the eastern North Kivu Province, churches, convents and Catholic schools have been vandalized and looted by armed groups of youths or militiamen. The Islamist ADF-NALU have targeted Christians in the north-eastern region for several years, ever since their attempt to overthrow the Ugandan government failed.

Converts: Converts to Christianity (especially from Islam) can be found throughout the North Kivu province in particular. Although there are Christians with a Muslim background in other parts of the country too, the latter are relatively less exposed to persecution and pressure from family and community in comparison. To a lesser extent, converts from African traditional religions to Christianity also face pressure.

Non-traditional Christian communities: Baptists, Pentecostal churches and similar groups have faced persecution principally from the Islamist ADF-NALU. Although these non-traditional Christian groups are in the minority they are growing rapidly compared to other Christian denominations. They face discrimination and persecution from members of the dominant historical Christian groups and Islamist groups in the Muslim-dominated part of the country. The ongoing conflict also affects this group of Christians as it does for all citizens in the country.

WWL 2023: Persecution Dynamics / DRC

Reporting period

1 October 2021 - 30 September 2022

Position on the World Watch List

DRC: World Watch List	Points	WWL Rank
WWL 2023	67	37
WWL 2022	66	40
WWL 2021	64	40
WWL 2020	56	57
WWL 2019	55	54

Ranks are shown above whenever the country scored 41 points or more in the WWL 2019-2023 reporting periods

The rise in total score was due mainly to increased pressure in the *Church sphere* (13.0 points, up from 12.0 in WWL 2022). This reflects the fact that the main challenges faced by Christians have been the problems posed by the activities of Islamic militants especially in the eastern part of the country. This is where churches have been under repeated attack. The existence of organized crime and corruption have also made church and community life there extremely difficult.

Persecution engines

DRC: Persecution engines	Abbreviation	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	IO	Very strong
Religious nationalism	RN	Not at all
Ethno-religious hostility	ERH	Medium
Clan oppression	CO	Medium
Christian denominational protectionism	CDP	Weak
Communist and post-Communist oppression	CPCO	Not at all
Secular intolerance	SI	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	DPA	Medium
Organized corruption and crime	OCC	Very strong

The scale for the level of influence of Persecution engines in society is: Not at all / Very weak / Weak / Medium / Strong / Very strong. For more information see WWL Methodology.

Islamic oppression (Very strong)

This Persecution engine is particularly present in North Kivu and it is seen mainly in the activities of militant Islamic groups, especially ADF-NALU. The ideological influence of this group is affecting society and ordinary people in those parts of the country who are predominantly Muslim, thus further increasing the likelihood of Christians being persecuted, especially converts. It is important to note that this affects only a small portion of the DRC and in most parts of the country *Islamic oppression* is not a Persecution engine that has any significant presence.

Organized corruption and crime (Very strong)

Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI 2021) puts the country at rank 169 (out of 180 countries) with a score of 19 out of 100. Corruption (and impunity for corrupt activities) is rampant in both the public and private sectors. It particularly affects the Christian community which opposes it since it is a form of injustice and contradicts Christian principles of faith. This engine is strengthened by unscrupulous businesses.

Dictatorial paranoia (Medium)

DRC has suffered enormously under different regimes. Joseph Kabila postponed elections for two years without legal grounds. His supporters and security apparatus targeted Christians who voiced their discontent with his rule. The incumbent president, Felix Tshisekedi, came to power in December 2018 with a promise of cleaning up the mess and taking the country forward, However, so far there are no tangible reforms taking place that can significantly protect the population from rebel group attacks in the country and reduce the level of persecution targeting Christians. Corruption remains rampant and the security apparatus remains unaccountable for their actions.

Clan oppression blended with Ethno-religious hostility (Medium)

Much of the violence in North Kivu, Kisangani and in Kasai also bears an ethnic dimension. This is still the case, but was particularly evident in the WWL 2018 reporting period when the Bana Mura militia carried out well-planned attacks (at times led by national army officers) aimed at eliminating the Luba and Luala populations. Some of the attacks targeted churches. This has continued in all following WWL reporting periods, including WWL 2023.

Drivers of persecution

DRC:									
Drivers of Persecution	IO	RN	ERH	CO	CDP	CPCO	SI	DPA	OCC
	VERY STRONG		MEDIUM	MEDIUM	WEAK			MEDIUM	VERY STRONG
Government officials								Medium	
Ethnic group leaders			Medium	Medium					
Religious leaders of other churches					Weak				
Violent religious groups	Very strong								Very strong
Citizens (people from the broader society), including mobs	-				Weak				
One's own (extended) family					Weak				
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups									Strong

The scale for the level of influence of Drivers of persecution in society is: Not at all / Very weak / Weak / Medium / Strong / Very strong. For more information see WWL Methodology.

Drivers of Islamic oppression

- **Violent religious groups (Very strong):** The main drivers of *Islamic oppression* in the DRC are violent religious groups as well as ordinary people who are influenced by radical Islamic ideology. The ADF-NALU is responsible for the persecution of Christians in North Kivu, in the eastern part of the country. This group has violently attacked Christians and churches. Ordinary people influenced by militant brands of Islam especially persecute Christians with a Muslim background (i.e. converts).

Drivers of Dictatorial paranoia

- **Government officials (Medium):** There are several drivers of *Dictatorial paranoia* in the DRC. Chief among these drivers is (now ex-)President Kabila and his allies who were determined to stay in power at all costs, but also includes supporters, political parties and militant groups affiliated with Kabila directly or indirectly. Due to the role that the Roman Catholic Church has tried to play in resolving the political and constitutional crises (caused by the ex-president delaying presidential elections), some have perceived Christians as being allied with the opposition. As a result, churches have faced pressure from the supporters and allies of the (ex-)president.

Drivers of organized corruption and crime

Since DRC is one of the most corrupt nations in Africa, this Persecution engine has a lot of strong drivers:

- **Violent religious groups (Strong):** Militant Islamic groups also participate in illegal mining. Research carried out by the [Institute for Security Studies](#) (ISS) in 2016 states: "The smuggling of DRC's natural resources is linked to the conflict in the region, warning that al-Shabaab remains sufficiently resourced to fund its activities despite efforts by African Union Mission in Somalia and the United Nations to cut off its channels of funding" (The East African, 25 March 2016).
- **Organized crime networks (Strong):** The crime and corruption related to the [mining industry](#) in DRC are profound (Raconteur, 4 June 2019). One of the wealthiest nations in Africa with massive natural resources, DRC has seen numerous violent clashes and violations of human rights. Organized crime networks have become adept at smuggling minerals out of the country via a variety of routes.
- **Paramilitary groups (Strong):** DRC has numerous paramilitary and rebel groups that show disregard for civilian lives. These include M27, Mai-Mai, National Forces of Liberation, RUD-Urunana, Nyatura, FDLR, Mai Mai Sheka, Mai Mai Yakutumba, Raia Mutomboki, FNI, FRPI, FPJC, Mai-Mai Simba, UPC, Forces for Renewal, Mai Mai Kata Katanga, Mai Mai Gédéon, CORAK and CPK. These and other groups are creating an environment of lawlessness; they are illegally smuggling mining produce and they are merciless to those who oppose them. Christians in DRC who speak out against this practice experience severe reprisals.
- **Government officials (Medium):** Government representatives often embezzle public money and do not protect civilians from persecution. Those who attack Christians often enjoy impunity due to corruption.

Drivers of Clan oppression blended with Ethno-religious hostility (Medium)

- **Ethnic leaders (Medium):** In conflicts that pit ethnic groups against one another and in which ethnically and regionally based armed groups are active, Christians are targeted for various reasons. For instance, some ethnic and militant leaders belong to cults or adhere to indigenous traditional belief systems that generate hostility towards Christians.

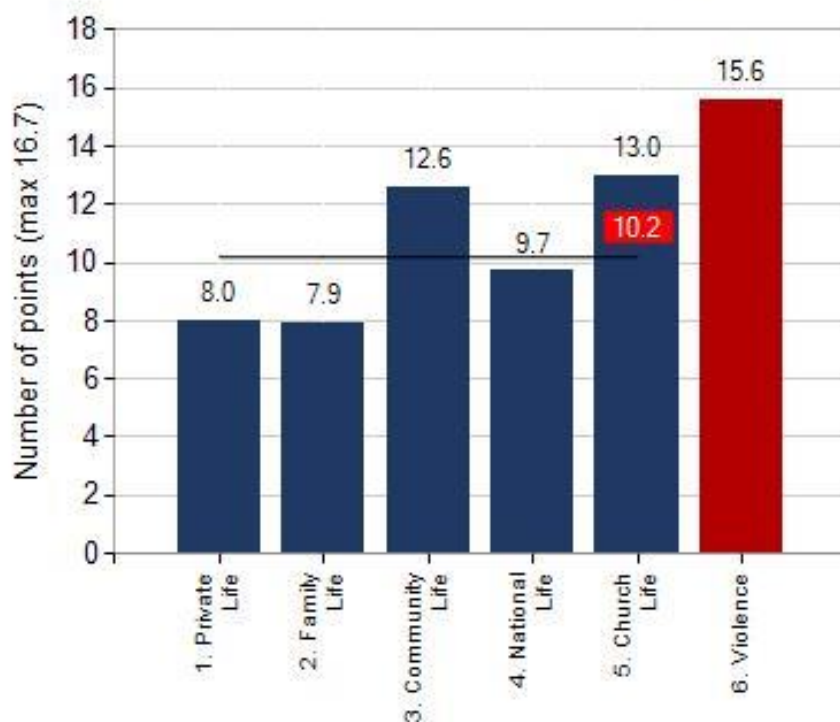
The Persecution pattern

The WWL 2023 Persecution pattern for DRC shows (see chart below):

- The average pressure on Christians in DRC is high at 10.2 points, increasing from 10.0 points in WWL 2022.
- As far as pressure is concerned, the *Church sphere* scores highest with 13.0 points (12.0 in WWL 2022), followed by the *Community sphere* (12.6 points). This reflects the fact that the main challenges faced by Christians are the problems that Islamic militants pose especially in the eastern part of the country where churches have been under repeated attack as well as the influence of criminal groups and corruption that make church and community life extremely difficult.

- The score for violence is at an extreme level 15.6 points (the same as in WWL 2022). This is largely due to killings by the various Islamic and other militant groups.

WWL 2023 Persecution Pattern for Democratic Republic of the Congo



Pressure in the 5 spheres of life

In each of the five spheres of life discussed below, four questions have been selected from the WWL 2023 questionnaire for brief commentary and explanation. The selection usually (but not always) reflects the highest scoring elements. In some cases, an additional paragraph per sphere is included to give further information deemed important. (To see how individual questions are scored on a scale of 0-4 points, please see the “WWL Scoring example” in the WWL Methodology, available at: <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/world-watch-list-documentation/>, password: freedom).

Pressure in Block 1 / Private sphere

Block 1.4: It has been risky for Christians to reveal their faith in written forms of personal expression (including expressions in blogs and Facebook etc.). (3.00 points)

In the areas controlled by the ADF, it is virtually impossible to write about Christian faith as the jihadist groups are known to go from home to home in villages to find out who said what, especially if it was done in the context of condemning the actions of Islamic militants. In addition, 'inter-denominational church changers' also face pressure from their family or community, for instance when someone leaves the Catholic tradition and joins an evangelical congregation, they would be discriminated against and put under pressure. In the context of the lack of freedom of expression in the country, any Christian who expresses his Christian faith in a way which could

be seen as opposing the action of the government, would be put under pressure from the government.

Block 1.5: It has been risky for Christians to display Christian images or symbols. (2.50 points)

This is the case for converts from some of the traditional belief systems and Islam and is particularly risky where jihadist groups are active. There have been reports that ADF militants have been singling out those wearing Christian symbols for killing. ADF fighters often visit villages and search house to house and at times carry out rape and burn down whole villages. Those who are seen with Christian symbols are very likely to be severely mistreated by these jihadists.

Block 1.7: It has been risky for Christians to speak about their faith with immediate family members. (2.25 points)

Religion defines relationships. In a communal society, any change from the established pattern in the community can rouse hostility. Converts from Islam to Christianity (and interdenominational converts) face this issue in particular. They can be expelled from their homes.

Block 1.9: It has been risky for Christians to meet with other Christians. (2.25 points)

This happens in the context of the areas under the serious influence of ADF and other armed groups. It can also be an issue in some homes and in the community due to the influence of community leaders and elders.

Pressure in Block 2 / Family sphere

Block 2.11: Spouses of converts have been put under pressure (successfully or unsuccessfully) by others to divorce. (2.75 points)

This certainly happens for those who convert. In some contexts, religion plays a key role in deciding who should or should not get married to whom. The pressure to divorce comes in the following context:

- i) In Catholic families, if one person of a married couple becomes an evangelical Christian and joins a Protestant church, this would lead to pressure from the family to have the marriage annulled. This is done in a bid to suppress inter-denominational conversions. It is a form of punishment for the convert family as well as a lesson for others.
- ii) In the northern part of the country where the Muslim population is concentrated, there is also pressure to divorce a convert to Christianity. This occurs particularly due to the resentment among Muslims leaders who say that Christian leaders are intentionally excluding them from national religious dialogue.
- iii) In the ADF areas, the pressure to divorce a convert comes because the community fears that ADF jihadists might learn of the convert's new faith and can come and attack the community.

Block 2.3: Christians have been hindered in celebrating a Christian wedding for faith-related reasons. (2.50 points)

Christian weddings have been hindered in areas where Christianity is seen as a threat or where there is a lack of security for such celebrations. Due to the presence of jihadists in the eastern part of the country, any Christian celebrations can be dangerous. Christian couples also face the challenge of being expected to perform certain cultural rituals and traditional customs. Interdenominational marriages may also be hindered by family members of a couple planning to get married.

Block 2.8: Christian children have been pressured into attending anti-Christian or majority religion teaching at any level of education. (2.25 points)

This happens in many contexts. In ADF controlled areas, Christians are under pressure to abandon going to school because ADF militants can show up at any time and abduct them or force them to learn Islamic scriptures. Also, the Catholic Church plays a key role in the education sector in DRC and runs many elementary schools and high schools. Non-Catholics who attend Catholic schools are forced to take part in Catholic services and receive Catholic teaching. A country expert states that "in some places, those who decline to participate face the prospect of expulsion". In places where there is no alternative education system, this is an issue of life and death. The poor are the most affected in this regard.

Block 2.13: Christians have lost their inheritance rights because of their conversion to Christianity or (if a person already was a Christian) other types of Christianity. (2.00 points)

There is a cultural element to inheritance, which becomes more complicated when religion is added. Leaving the religion of one's family is tantamount to forfeiting the right to inherit. This issue exists in the context of converts from Islam and those who change their denomination from Catholic to Protestant. Women are affected by this in particular.

Pressure in Block 3 / Community sphere

Block 3.1: Christians have been harassed, threatened or obstructed in their daily lives for faith-related reasons (e.g. for not meeting majority religion or traditional dress codes, beard codes etc.). (3.50 points)

Obstruction, threatening behavior and the deliberate targeting of Christians in their daily lives can be observed in DRC in many ways and forms. For instance, Christian businesses and shops have been deliberately ruined by ADF and other armed groups. In some areas, education is becoming difficult to access for Christians and there is also monitoring by jihadists of what teachers teach. Travelling can also be very difficult for Christians.

Block 3.3: Christians have been under threat of abduction and/or forced marriage. (3.25 points)

This is the day to day fear that Christians in Eastern DRC have to endure. This has to be seen in the context of the lack of rule of law in the country and the existence of many armed groups especially in the eastern part of the country, where the abduction of girls by armed groups is

quite frequent. This is particularly true for Christian girls. Many are then forced into marriage with group members.

Block 3.2: Christians have been monitored by their local communities or by private groups (this includes reporting to police, being shadowed, telephone lines listened to, emails read/censored, etc.). (3.00 points)

In areas under the influence of militants (including ADF), Christians have to make sure that they do not speak against injustice, violence or Islamic militants. If they do, they will face serious problems. For example, urging your congregation to reject involvement with armed groups is likely to invite attack. Those who speak against violence may well be abducted or silenced by other means. As a result, many church leaders choose not to speak publicly about rights violations and corruption.

Block 3.9: Christians have faced disadvantages in their education at any level for faith-related reasons (e.g. restrictions of access to education). (3.00 points)

In the eastern part of the country, Christians are at a disadvantage in their education because of the violence that often targets them. Displacement and insecurity make it difficult for pupils and students to pursue their education properly. Also, the education system is highly influenced by the Catholic Church and that is not necessarily to the benefit of other Christian denominations, even though providing education is a positive thing in a country where social services are very poor.

Pressure in Block 4 / National sphere

Block 4.14: Those who caused harm to Christians have deliberately been left unpunished. (3.75 points)

In many circumstances, there are no attempts made to bring the perpetrators of violence against Christians to justice. This may be due to corruption or complicity, or lack of willingness on the part of the authorities.

Block 4.8: Christians have been hindered in expressing their views or opinions in public. (3.50 points)

Freedom of expression are limited by three major groups - the government, the ADF and criminal cartels. The law provides for freedom of speech and of the press; however, the transitional government restricted these rights in practice and has continued to violate press freedom. In addition, when Christians speak out against corruption, greed and injustice, they risk being abducted or facing some other form of attack. The government is also restricting freedom of religion (interference); and also does not protect Christians from those who violate their freedom of expression (duty to protect).

Block 4.9: Christian civil society organizations or political parties have been hindered in their functioning or forbidden because of their Christian convictions. (3.50 points)

This is linked to many factors - the limitation due to *Dictatorial paranoia*, the presence of ADF and organized crime. Civil society freedom is restricted in many ways, for instance:

- Due to the levels of violence and insecurity in certain regions, Christian civil society organizations have been hindered in their activities.
- The government keeps organizations that are known for being critical of the government under surveillance and hinders their activities.

Block 4.12: Christians, churches or Christian organizations have been hindered in publicly displaying religious symbols. (3.00 points)

In areas where ADF militants and other jihadists operate, showing Christian symbols is very risky. The sight of a cross, for instance, can provoke attack. This particularly affects church leaders, who are often specifically targeted, especially when they are known to reject violence and the activities of armed groups.

Pressure in Block 5 / Church sphere

Block 5.1: Church activities have been monitored, hindered, disturbed, or obstructed. (3.75 points)

Armed groups monitor churches where they operate and constantly disrupt church activities through acts of violence. Their attacks have left many villages and churches empty. The government also monitors churches, especially those that are seen as being 'unfriendly' to the president. In the WWL 2023 reporting period, this has particularly affected Catholic churches due to their criticism of the government.

Block 5.8: Christian preaching, teaching and/or published materials have been monitored. (3.75 points)

This is practiced by the government, ADF militants and other organized groups. This is a part of a wider issue regarding freedom of association and assembly.

Block 5.2: It has been difficult to get registration or legal status for churches at any level of government. (3.50 points)

The Ministry of Justice failed once again to issue registration permits for church groups in the WWL 2023 reporting period. No registration permits have been issued since 2014, according to the US State Department (IRFR 2021).

Block 5.5: Churches have been hindered from organizing Christian activities outside church buildings. (3.50 points)

In many areas, the sheer lack of security prevents such outside events being planned. In other areas, the government has been hostile to church activities taking place outside, alleging that such activities could lead to public disorder. The reality is that the government is not open to

freedom of association and freedom of the press and religion. The government also wants to make sure that church activities do not turn into a form of antigovernment protest.

In the northern part of the country, the separatist religious movement, Bundu Dia Kongo (Gathering of Kongo – BDK), exists and has created yet another dimension which Christians can easily get caught up in when government forces and BDK armed groups clash.

Violence

Violence is defined in WWL Methodology as the deprivation of physical freedom or as bodily harm to Christians or damage to their property. It includes severe threats (mental abuse). The table is based on reported cases as much as possible, but since many incidents go unreported, the numbers must be understood as being minimum figures. The following 5 points should be considered when using the data provided in the Block 6 table:

1. Some incidents go unreported because the Christians involved choose not to speak about the hostility being faced. Possible reasons for this may be:

- *Doing so would expose them to more attacks. For example, if a family member is killed because of his/her faith, the survivors might decide to keep silent about the circumstances of the killing to avoid provoking any further attacks.*
- *In some circumstances, the reticence to pass on information may be due to the danger of exposure caused by converts returning to their previous faith.*
- *If persecution is related to sexual violence - due to stigma, survivors often do not tell even their closest relatives.*
- *In some cultural settings, if your loved one is killed, you might be under the obligation to take revenge. Christians not wishing to do that, may decide to keep quiet about it.*

2. Other incidents go unreported for the following possible reasons:

- *Some incidents never reach the public consciousness, because no one really knows about it; or the incident is simply not considered worth reporting; or media coverage is deliberately blocked or distorted; or media coverage is not deliberately blocked, but the information somehow gets lost; or the incidents are deliberately not reported widely for security reasons (e.g. for the protection of local church leaders).*
- *In situations where Christians have been discriminated against for many years, armed conflict can make them additionally vulnerable. Christians killed in areas where fighting regularly takes place are unlikely to be reported separately. Examples in recent years have been Sudan, Syria and Myanmar.*
- *Christians who die through the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care (due to long-term discrimination) are unlikely to be reported separately. Christians are not always killed directly; they can be so squeezed by regulations and other oppressive factors that they die – not at once, but in the course of years. This often includes the deprivation of basic necessities such as clean water and medical care, or exclusion from government assisted socio-economic development projects. These numbers could be immense.*

3. For further discussion (with a focus on the complexity of assessing the numbers of Christians killed for their faith) please see World Watch Monitor's article dated 13 November 2013 available at:

<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2013/11/number-of-christian-martyrs-continues-to-cause-debate/>.

4. The use of symbolic numbers: *In cases where it has been impossible to count exactly, a symbolic round figure (10*, 100* etc.) is given and indicated with an asterisk. A symbolic number of 10* could in reality even be 100 or more but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 100* could go well over 1000 but the real number is uncertain. A symbolic number of 1,000* could go well over 10,000 but, again, the real number is uncertain. The same applies for symbolic numbers 10,000*, 100,000* and 1,000,000*: Each could indicate much higher numbers, but WWR chooses to be cautious because the real number is uncertain.*

5. The symbol "x" in the table: *This denotes a known number which cannot be published due to security concerns.*

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Violence Block question	WWL 2023	WWL 2022
6.1 How many Christians have been killed for faith-related reasons (including state sanctioned executions)?	100 *	100 *
6.2 How many churches or public Christian properties (schools, hospitals, cemeteries, etc.) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	100 *	10 *
6.3 How many Christians have been detained for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.4 How many Christians have been sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment, or similar things for faith-related reasons?	0	0
6.5 How many Christians have been abducted for faith-related reasons (including Christians missing in a persecution context)?	100 *	134 *
6.6 How many Christians have been raped or otherwise sexually harassed for faith-related reasons?	100	100 *
6.7 How many cases have there been of forced marriages of Christians to non-Christians?	100	100 *
6.8 How many Christians have been otherwise physically or mentally abused for faith-related reasons (including beatings and death threats)?	1000 *	100 *
6.9 How many houses of Christians or other property (excluding shops) have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	100 *	100 *
6.10 How many shops or businesses of Christians have been attacked, damaged, bombed, looted, destroyed, burned down, closed or confiscated for faith-related reasons?	100	100 *
6.11 How many Christians have been forced to leave their homes or go into hiding in-country for faith-related reasons?	1000	1000 *
6.12 How many Christians have been forced to leave the country for faith-related reasons?	1000	10 *

5 Year trends

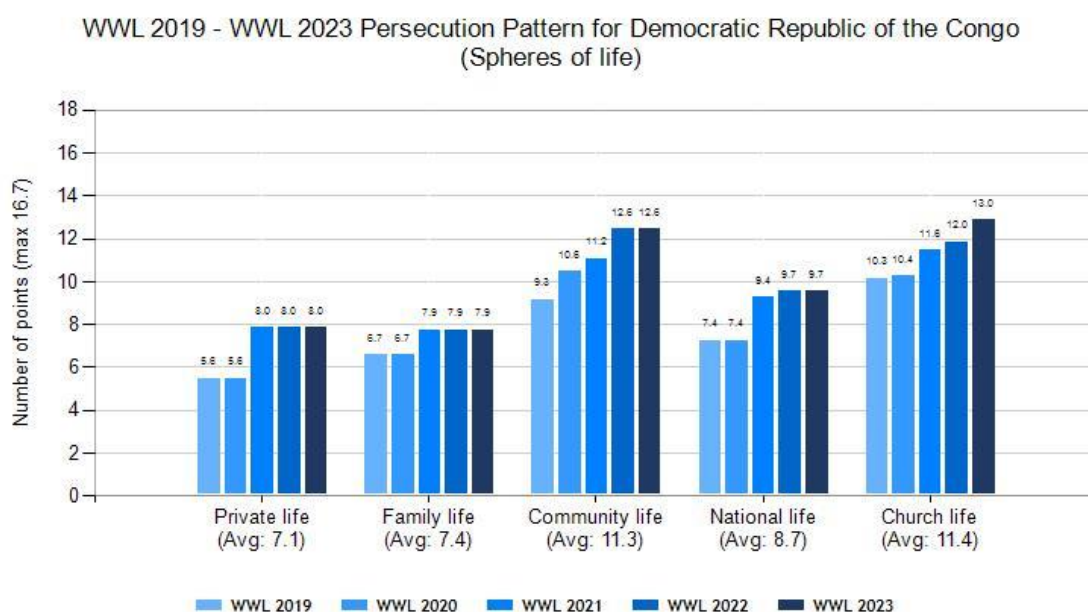
The following three charts show the levels of pressure and violence faced by Christians in the country over the last five WWL reporting periods.

5 Year trends: Average pressure

DRC: WWL 2019 - WWL 2023 Persecution Pattern history	Average pressure over 5 Spheres of life
2023	10.2
2022	10.0
2021	9.6
2020	8.1
2019	7.8

The table above shows that over the last 5 WWL reporting periods the level of average pressure has increased steadily from 7.8 points in WWL 2019 to 10.2 points in WWL 2023. This rise has mainly been due to violence perpetrated by ADF jihadists and other armed groups.

5 Year trends: Pressure in each sphere of life

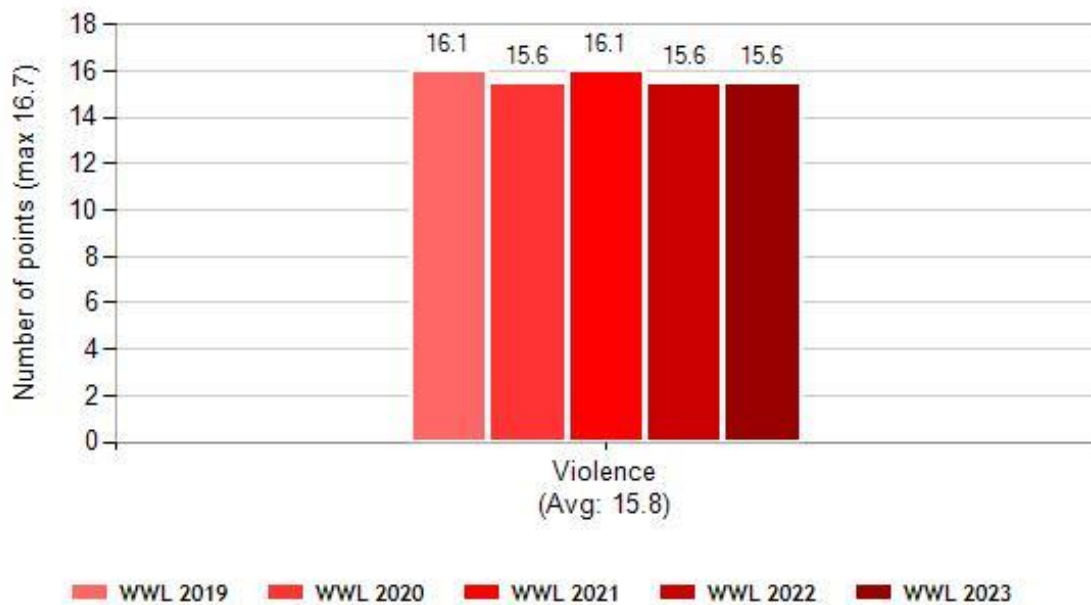


The chart above shows that the highest levels of pressure are to be found in the *Church* and *Community spheres of life*. This is a reflection of how Christians and churches are being put under pressure by armed groups and Islamic militants in the eastern part of the country. Pressure from the government also contributes to the increases in the *Church sphere*.

5 Year trends: Violence against Christians

The chart below shows that the scores for violence have been at an extreme level (consistently 15.6 points or above) in all five WWL reporting periods. This reflects the severity of violence against Christians in the eastern part of the country.

WWL 2019 - WWL 2023 Persecution Pattern for Democratic Republic of the Congo (Violence)



Gender-specific religious persecution / Female

Group	Female Pressure Points
Economic	Denied inheritance or possessions
Political and Legal	Denied access to Christian religious materials, teachings and rites; Denied custody of children; Forced divorce; Forced marriage
Security	Abduction; Trafficking; Violence – death; Violence – physical; Violence – sexual
Social and Cultural	Violence – psychological
Technological	-

The Democratic Republic of Congo has a complex political, socio-economic and cultural landscape. Women across several areas of DRC, particularly those dominated by Islam, are commonly treated as inferior. This has an impact on their experience of much of life for girls. For married converts from Islam, this can play out in being denied access to their children, or commonly - if widowed - being denied access to their inheritance.

In addition to this discrimination, Congolese Christian women are vulnerable to abduction, rape, trafficking, and sexual slavery, especially by ADF militants. A country expert summarizes: “Women and girls are raped, forced to marry ADF soldiers and others are trafficked. Sometimes these women and girls are killed.” Many Christian women who are spared are reportedly kept as a kind of “trophy”. Christian women, particularly converts, may be forcibly married, forcibly

impregnated or forcibly divorced. These forced marriages are often early marriages, as sources report that elderly Muslim men often prefer young Christian girls. Child marriage rates are high in the DRC, with some [37% of girls](#) marrying before they turn 18– among the top 20 countries in the world with the highest rates of child marriage (Girls Not Brides, accessed 30 November 2022).

Kidnappings and instances of rape most commonly occur at the hands of armed groups in the northeastern regions, causing extreme psychological distress and trauma for the victims. According to experts, women are sometimes raped next to male hostages, who are bound. Certain terrorist groups seek Islamization through violent means, forcibly marrying abducted women to militia leaders and subjecting others to a life of sexual slavery. Women and girls have also been known to be used as human shields during violent confrontations with government forces. “The persecutors sometimes put women (sometimes pregnant) and small girls in front, knowing that they cannot be easily shot”, an expert revealed.

Reports indicate that government soldiers have also been complicit in the widespread [sexual violence](#) against women in conflict zones (HRW, 18 October 2022). Due to the shame of sexual violence, Christian women and girls may face isolation and rejection from their families and communities following an attack. Rape can “[socially destroy](#)” communities and victims, due to stigma and the fear of disease linked to rape (van Wieringen, K., 2020). Speaking on the impact on the victims and the multiplier effect in the community, a country expert observed: “Women and girls who are persecuted through discrimination and sexual violence often get traumatized and develop very low self-esteem. As a result, they do not see themselves as capable adults who have important roles to play in society.” In more extreme cases, an attack may cost a girl her life.

Gender-specific religious persecution / Male

Group	Male Pressure Points
Economic	Denied inheritance or possessions; Economic harassment via business/job/work access
Political and Legal	Imprisonment by government
Security	Abduction; Military/militia conscription/service against conscience; Trafficking; Violence – death; Violence – physical
Social and Cultural	Violence – Verbal
Technological	-

In a context of endemic violence and impunity, Congolese Christian men face violent and extreme forms of persecution, including maiming, abduction, forced recruitment into militia groups, forced labor, sexual mutilation, disemboweling and brutal killings. While women and girls face the highest rates of rape, an expert highlights that “men and boys also face conflict-related sexual violence.”

To escape their kidnappers, men may be forced to pay large ransoms; these fines paralyze already impoverished families, sentencing them to live out the next few years in even more desperate poverty. Even without punitive ransoms, Christian men reportedly face discrimination in the workplace and in some cases, are denied the opportunity to work.

The targeting of Christian men in these ways also serves to weaken their families as well as the wider Church. Church leaders are also targeted, especially if they have publicly denounced violence. "Churches that attempt to criticize the government risk being shut down and having their leaders arrested. Furthermore, churches that try to speak against the actions of the ADF expose themselves to suffering more violent attacks," an expert shares.

Persecution of other religious minorities

According to the US State Department (IRFR 2021):

"Muslim community leaders again said the government did not afford them some of the same privileges as larger religious groups. The government continued to deny Muslims the opportunity to provide chaplains for Muslims in the military, police force, and hospitals, despite a complaint filed in 2015 with the then president and his cabinet."

"A representative of the Jehovah's Witnesses said there have been several attacks on members in the interior provinces, which he described as less tolerant of Jehovah's Witnesses than Kinshasa. The representative said the attacks included threats, beatings, and kidnappings, and took place in Kwilu Province in the west and Maniema Province in the east."

The government also used excessive force against the [Bundu dia Kongo](#) religious group which resulted in the death of over 55 people in April 2020 in western Kongo Central Province (HRW, 19 May 2020).

Future outlook

The outlook for Christians as viewed through the lens of:

Islamic oppression

The country has struggled to deal with ADF for many years and there is no plan of action to put a stop to the violent attacks. Thus, it is expected that ADF will remain a potent driver of persecution in the country for some years to come. The group was designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the [US State Department](#) in March 2021. A [UN report](#) released in July 2020 has suggested that ADF might have committed crimes against humanity (Reliefweb, 6 July 2020). As long as the general turmoil in DRC remains unresolved, *Islamic oppression* will remain active in the country.

Dictatorial paranoia

Many hoped that the change of president in January 2019 would bring about positive reforms. However, so far there is nothing visible to report. Impunity, corruption and the abuse of human rights defenders continue as before. Thus, although this Persecution engine has become less

strong through the departure of President Kabila, the situation is still problematic for Christians and churches. This has continued to be the case in WWL 2023 and beyond.

Organized corruption and crime

This is probably the toughest Persecution engine to eliminate. It is very complex due to multiple actors being involved at domestic, regional and international levels. Even neighboring countries are believed to be involved in smuggling minerals out of DRC. There is also an involvement of unscrupulous businesses. Thus, this engine will remain potent and destructive in the country and Christians and churches will remain vulnerable to its effects.

Clan oppression blended with Ethno-religious hostility

It is likely that this Persecution engine will eventually recede in the long-term. However, in the short-term it may rise since Christians are evangelizing frequently and the reaction to this may increase in magnitude.

External Links - Persecution Dynamics

- Drivers of persecution description: Institute for Security Studies - <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/business/illegal-minerals-from-DR-Congo-fund-terrorist-groups/2560-3134040-rpdwnpz/index.html>
- Drivers of persecution description: mining industry - <https://www.raconteur.net/business-innovation/cobalt-mining-human-rights>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: 37% of girls - <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/atlas/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: sexual violence - <https://humanglemedia.com/55-sexual-violence-cases-reported-in-dr-congo-within-a-month/>
- Gender-specific religious persecution Female description: “socially destroy” - <https://jhumanitarianaction.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s41018-020-00074-4>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: Bundu dia Kongo - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/19/dr-congo-bloody-crackdown-political-religious-group>
- Persecution of other religious minorities: - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/19/dr-congo-bloody-crackdown-political-religious-group>
- Future outlook: US State Department - <https://www.state.gov/state-department-terrorist-designations-of-isis-affiliates-and-leaders-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-and-mozambique/>
- Future outlook: UN report - <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/report-violations-human-rights-and-international-humanitarian-law>

Further useful reports

A selection of in-depth reports and smaller articles are available on the new Research & Reports page of the website od.org. As in earlier years, they are also available on the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom) using the following links:

- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/>
- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Democratic%20Republic%20of%20the%20Congo>